OVERSEAS

CIA's critics threaten to publish more names as they come under fire from 'Washington Post'

From Fred Emery
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The *Washington Post*, in a scathing leading article today on the murder in Athens of Mr Richard Welch, chief of American intelligence operations in Greece, castigates those who expose American agents.

The newspaper singles out the magazine *Counterspy*, which disclosed a year ago Mr Welch's Central Intelligence Agency capacity, and Mr Philip Agee, the former CIA man living in Britain, who also published agent's names in his exposé book.

The leading article says: "Precisely because those using these tactics include experienced former CIA men, they would be in a position to know that public identification of Richard Welch was tantamount to an open invitation to kill him.

"The surprise is not that this happened to him, but rather that it has not happened previously to others. That none of the critics pulled the trigger is meaningless. There are enough potential killers at large around the world to spare the critics that chore."

The newspaper goes on to suggest that such critics are abetting the technique of indirect assassination which they often denounce as a characteristic of the CIA. It concludes:

"To think that any of the CIA's past excesses constitute a moral licence for extra-legal punishment of its employees is just wrong."

In view of the role played by the *Washington Post* in exposure journalism (most recently concerning CIA men involved in the so-called assassination plots which the Agency in vain asked the Senate committee to withhold), many of its critics will doubtless see this lament as being somewhat belated.

But it only confirms a conflict between editorial comment in the American press and news reporting techniques ; different men are in charge, and today's *Washington Post* again demonstrates the split.

The same edition carries a news analysis noting how the Welch murder is being used by the CIA and its friends to generate a backlash against the exposers.

"Of particular importance is the attempt by Mr William Colby, the outgoing CIA director, to have Congress pass a Secrets Act—albeit a very watered-down one compared with Britain's—which would make it punishable to publish actual CIA secrets. It is unlikely to pass the present liberal Congress, particularly in an election year, but Mr Colby is clearly making his last stand.

The *Post* news analysis also notes, in stark contradiction to the leading article: "Today it seems that everything but the Agency's classified telephone book has been thrown into the public domain. Yet there has been no finding or claim that the Agency's emergence from the closet has substantially weakened its intelligence-gathering capability".

In the meantime, Senator Frank Church, chairman of the Senate intelligence committee, which will be producing soon proposals to reorganize the CIA, has taken exception to the White House characterization of Mr Welch's murder.

Mr Ford's spokesman said the President felt that the publication of names was "partly responsible" for the murder. Mr Church took this as a reflection on his committee which published in its report on assassinations, 12 names of CIA men, most of them in retirement, in spite of official entreaties to desist. It did not publish Mr Welch's name.

Senator Church rejected in the White House statement what he saw as an implication "unworthy of a presidential spokesman".

The small group of radicals known as Fifth Estate for Security Education maintain they will publish in their next issue of *Counterspy* the names of CIA men in Angola and Paris, among other places.

Our Athens Correspondent writes : The Greek Ministry of Public Order today offered a reward of more than 5m drachmas (£70,000) for information leading to the arrest of Mr Welch's killers. Lesser rewards of 1m to 2m drachmas (£14,285 to £28,570) were offered for information assisting the police.

The body of Mr Welch was flown today from Athens to the United States for burial at Arlington cemetery near Washington.